WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of cleaning a membrane filtration module, the module comprising at least one membrane situated in a feed-containing vessel, wherein the membrane extends longitudinally between an upper header and a lower header, wherein a first end of the membrane is potted in the upper header, wherein a second end of the membrane is potted in the lower header, wherein the upper header and the lower header are vertically spaced, wherein at least one of the upper header and the lower header comprises at least one opening, and wherein the membrane comprises a permeable wall, the method comprising:

a) applying a feed comprising at least one contaminant to a first side of the permeable wall and withdrawing a filtrate from a second side of the permeable wall;

b) suspending applying the feed and withdrawing the filtrate;

c) cleaning the permeable wall, whereby the contaminant is dislodged from the permeable wall and into a liquid surrounding the membrane;

d) sweeping the feed-containing vessel in a direction substantially parallel to the membrane, whereby the liquid containing contaminant is removed through the opening; and

e) recommencing applying the feed and withdrawing the filtrate.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the opening is in the lower header and wherein the filtrate is withdrawn from the upper header.

3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

f) introducing a gas into the module through the opening, whereby bubbles are produced which scour the permeable wall during cleaning.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein sweeping is performed concurrently with cleaning.

5. The method according to claim 1, wherein sweeping comprises high velocity sweeping.

6. The method according to claim 1, wherein sweeping is conducted by applying a fluid under pressure to the feed-containing vessel.

7. A method of cleaning a membrane filtration module, the module comprising at least one membrane located in a feed-containing vessel, wherein the membrane extends vertically from an upper header into which a proximal end of the membrane is potted, the membrane comprising a permeable wall, the method comprising:

a) suspending a filtration operation;

b) performing a cleaning process on the permeable wall to dislodge contaminant matter therefrom into a liquid surrounding the membrane;

c) performing a sweep of the feed-containing vessel substantially parallel to the vertically extending membranes to remove the liquid containing the dislodged contaminant matter, at least in part, through an opening in the module beneath the membrane; and

d) recommencing the filtration operation.

8. The method according to claim 7, further comprising:

e) introducing a gas into the module, whereby bubbles are produced which scour the permeable wall during the step of performing a cleaning.

9. The method according to claim 7, wherein step b) and step c) are performed concurrently.

10. The method according to claim 7, wherein the sweep comprises a high velocity sweep.

11. The method according to claim 7, wherein performing a sweep comprises applying a fluid under pressure to the feed-containing vessel.

12. A method of cleaning a membrane filtration module, the module comprising at least one membrane situated in a feed-containing vessel, wherein the membrane extends longitudinally between an upper header and a lower header, wherein a first end of the membrane is potted in the upper header, wherein a second end of the membrane is potted in the lower header, wherein the upper header and the lower header are vertically spaced, and wherein the membrane comprises a permeable wall, the method comprising:

a) suspending a filtration operation;

b) cleaning the permeable wall, whereby the contaminant is dislodged from the permeable wall and into a liquid surrounding the membrane;

c) sweeping the feed-containing vessel, whereby the liquid containing contaminant is removed from the feed-containing vessel; and

d) recommencing the filtration operation.

13. The method according to claim 12, wherein a filtrate is withdrawn from the upper header.

14. The method according to claim 12, further comprising:

e) introducing a gas into the module through an opening in the lower header, whereby bubbles are produced which scour the permeable wall.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein step b) is performed concurrently with step e).

16. The method according to claim 12, wherein step b) is performed concurrently with step c).

17. The method according to claim 12, wherein sweeping comprises high velocity sweeping.

18. The method according to claim 12, wherein sweeping comprises applying a fluid under pressure to the feed-containing vessel.